Amendments to the Drawings:

Please replace the originally-filed drawings with the drawings contained on the enclosed Replacement Sheet.

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in response to the June 28, 2005 Office Action issued in connection with the above-identified patent application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 2 (the independent claims) have been amended. No new matter has been added. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner review and consider the amendments to the claims in view of the following remarks.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has objected to the drawings. In response, applicant has submitted herewith a Replacement Sheet which contains FIGs. 1-3. It is believed that the figures on the enclosed Replacement Sheet overcome the Examiner's objections.

Also in the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1, 2, 4 and 7-12 as allegedly anticipated by Lambert (U.S. 5,609,165). The Examiner has also rejected claims 1, 3, 5 and 6 as allegedly anticipated by Lee (U.S. 3,531,029). Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

The present invention is directed to a thimble which is substantially rigid and which is adapted for wearing on a user's fingertip. The thimble is dimensioned to extend over the first knuckle of the user's finger so that the first two bones of the finger on either side of the first knuckle are relatively collinear. The collinear positioning of the first and second bones of a user's finger about the first knuckle increases the leverage force that can be applied by the thimble-wearing finger to a needle, while reducing the likelihood of the needle slipping from the thimble's surface. To further prevent bending of the knuckle, the thimble is designed so that its entire leading-edge circumference, i.e., the edge remote from the fingertip, extends below the first knuckle in order to encircle the circumference of the finger. This feature is clearly shown in the figures.

In accordance with amended claim 1, a substantially rigid thimble is recited which is adapted to extend up over the first knuckle position "about its full circumference", i.e. so that the leading edge of the thimble extends over the first knuckle. This feature assists the wearer in keeping the wearer's finger substantially straight. The thimble also includes a needle contacting surface with one or more indents.

In accordance with amended claim 2, a substantially rigid thimble is recited. The claimed thimble extends over the first knuckle position of a user, "about its full circumference", so as to form a close tolerance push fit over the first knuckle. This causes bracing of the knuckle against substantial bending. The thimble of claim 2 also includes a needle contacting surface.

Turning now to U.S. Patent No. 5,609,165 (Lambert), the main feature of the thimble disclosed in Lambert is to allow a limited amount of axial movement such that when the finger protector is warn on a finger, "the finger may be bent to a limited extent". See col. 1, lines 45-49 and claim 1. In contrast, the thimble of now-amended claims 1 and 2 are "substantially rigid" so as to "assist the user in maintaining a substantially straight finger" (as in claim 1) or to cause "bracing [of] the knuckle against substantial bending" (as in claim 2). Neither of the thimbles of claims 1 and 2 provide for the finger to "be bent to a limited extent" as is required in Lambert. Accordingly, Lambert not only fails to teach the claimed invention but also teaches away from the claimed invention.

Turning now to U.S. Patent No. 3,531,029 (Lee), the thimble shown in Lee includes an open space 26 which allows the side edges 17 and 18 to be spread apart or squeezed together to accommodate different sized fingers. Lee col. 4, lines 10-14. This means that the metal material used for the thimble 25 is sufficiently flexible to allow for size adjustment. This also means, therefore, that if the opening 26 is positioned on the front side of the finger knuckle (on the fingernail side), the finger will be capable of bending as a result of the opening and of the material used for the thimble. In other words, the thimble of Lee does not extend over the first knuckle position "about its full circumference" to keep the finger "substantially rigid" as is now recited in claims 1 and 2. Instead, Lee provides an opening 26 so that the thimble can be adjusted in size. For this reason, it is believed that the thimbles as now claimed in amended independent claims 1 and 2 are not taught by Lee. Moreover, because Lee teaches an adjustable thimble and, therefore, an opening 26, Lee teaches away from the thimbles as now claimed.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is believed that independent claims 1 and 2, as now amended, and the dependent claims 3-12, are now in condition in immediate allowance.

It is believed that no fees or charges are required at this time in connection with the present application; however, if any fees or charges are required at this time, they may be charged to our Patent and Trademark Office Deposit Account No. 03-2412.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: September 26, 2005